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Critical Marketing Studies and Critical Marketing Education: Key Ideas, Concepts and Materialsⁱ

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Biography

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Abstract

This paper introduces Critical Marketing Studies and makes a case for its inclusion in marketing education. A review of relevant literature is provided and a range of important topics for a Critically oriented course of instruction are proposed. After justifying the need for Critical Marketing Education and explicating how lecturing staff might pursue such a pedagogical strategy, a summary of ten DVD sources is offered. These would be highly valuable supplementary resources to illuminate the complex and dark-side nature of the marketplace. Links are made to appropriate literature sources, concepts and social theory to enable the interested scholar to combine theoretical, conceptual and brute empirical realism in their lectures.

Keywords: Critical Marketing; Critical Marketing Studies; Critical Marketing Education; Dark-side of Marketing; Profit Motive.

Introduction

It is clear that our discipline has long suffered from a poor reputation. This need not be the case. We have a rich tradition of Criticalⁱⁱ scholarship which begs to be incorporated into our curriculum (see Tadajewski, 2010a). This material has many benefits that justify its inclusion, perhaps the most obvious being that Critical research and pedagogy challenges taken-for-granted concepts and theories in marketing, demonstrating the ideological function these perform for those who mobilise them (e.g. Hackley, 2009b; Klasson and Ulver, 2015; Moraes et al., 2011; Saatcioglu and Corus, 2016; Skålén, 2009; Varman and Saha, 2009).

In an attempt to illuminate the benefits and costs of the market and marketing, academics in this thought community have produced numerous papers, chapters and books that aim to challenge the representation of marketing theory and practice by situating it within its wider historical, social, cultural and political context (Catterall *et al.*, 1999; Tadajewski, 2011). While it is possible to trace the emergence of Critical perspectives to the beginning of the discipline (Burton, 2000; Tadajewski, 2010a), the majority of literature emerged from the late 1970s onwards when the first doctoral studies were produced which took an explicitly Critical orientation (e.g. Firat, 1978) through to seminal publications during the 1980s (Dholakia and Arndt, 1985; Firat *et al.*, 1987) and 1990s (Brownlie *et al.*, 1999), all the way to the present day (e.g. Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Hackley, 2009a).

At its most basic, Critical Marketing is concerned with “ontological denaturalisation” and defatalisation. The former is a term taken from Critical Management Studies (e.g. Fournier and Grey, 2000) and the latter is informed by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and philosophically rich historical work of Michel Foucault. What the first term means is that the current social order and the way it is so deeply structured around the construction of identity through consumption is not a natural state of affairs (e.g. Atik and Firat, 2013). It is the outcome of a particular process of historical development. This involves numerous actors and “vested interests” – of which corporations are the most obvious – who in their search for profit

use marketing and consumer research to ensure the on-going malleability of the market (Strasser, 1989) and human subjectivity (Foucault, 1982). Marketing is, from this perspective, not solely about satisfying consumers. Rather, it is about ensuring they are never totally satisfied (Alvesson, 1994). Only then can we maintain the plasticity of consumer desire (Belk *et al.*, 2003) and elevate market-based methods of satisfying these desires to a preeminent position (Atik and Firat, 2013).

Connected to ontological denaturalisation is the issue of defatalisation (Bourdieu, 1998). This is the idea that we can think beyond the existing economic structure of society to envision and enact social change. Notwithstanding this foundational commitment to think otherwise, Critical Marketing *does* register the value of many marketing activities. It firmly appreciates why people – especially those currently consigned to the margins of the global economy – want to access the consumption windfall available to more economically fortunate populations. This is not to dismiss the problems that accompany greater participation in the market as it stands (Prothero, 1990; Rettie *et al.*, 2012). The unsustainable status-quo of resource consumption is something that cannot be ignored, however difficult this issue will be to resolve (e.g. Armstrong-Soule and Reich, 2015; Luchs *et al.*, 2015; McDonald *et al.*, 2015; Wilk, 2012).

For mainstream academics, the fact that Critical Marketing is associated with various forms of social theory such as neo-Marxism (Hackley, 2009b), feminism (Catterall *et al.*, 2005; Hearn and Hein, 2015; Maclaran, 2015; Maclaran *et al.*, 2009) and postcolonialism (Dholakia, 2009; Varman and Belk, 2012) to name a few, might suggest that it is a politicised form of marketing education. This would be correct. Arguably though, all forms of marketing education are political in that they have some vision of the good society at their base. Mainstream perspectives focus on the satisfaction that can be derived from consumption; Critical Marketing Studies, by contrast, seeks to highlight the dark-side of marketing theory and practice. It incorporates discussion of the benefits associated with the marketing system, but also the costs. These are often a concomitant of the profit logic of the capitalist system. In this system, corporations are compelled to provide maximum possible returns to their shareholders (Bakan, 2005) and this skews their decision-making in anti-social ways (e.g. Klein, 2000).

The expansion of the market is accompanied by a range of problems (Hochschild, 2012). This is a distinctly unequal world, where dollar votes can buy you the items you desire, including human beings (Pennington *et al.*, 2009), the organs that sustain them (Moniruzzaman, 2012) and products that when taken to excess can cause them to fail (Farrell and Gordon, 2012). These are obviously examples taken from the end of a troubling continuum. On a daily basis, it remains the case that people trying to negotiate the marketplace face stigma, discrimination, psychological and physical abuse (Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Moufahim and Chatzidakis, 2012). The marketplace is sometimes not a pretty place.

Our textbooks, however, prefer to tell a “happy families” story about marketing. We present our students with an idealised normative view of marketing practice which sits uneasily with their experiences of being refused loans from banks or receiving poor service as a function of skin pigmentation. As a responsible discipline, committed to critique, we cannot ignore empirical reality. This self-reflexive stance provides a more realistic view of the marketplace that can be juxtaposed against the unreality of textbook accounts that largely neglect power relations, politics and the illegal activities undertaken by companies.

In what follows, I will indicate areas where Critical perspectives can be integrated into the marketing curriculum. These choices have been guided by recent edited collections that provide the intellectual scaffolding to support course development (Tadajewski and Maclaran, 2009; Tadajewski and Cluley, 2013). Clearly, I can only touch upon a limited range of topics. This paper, therefore, is best considered a “taster” of Critical Marketing, not a definitive statement of aims, objectives and contributions.

A History of Critical Marketing Studies

Marketing has a long history of self-generated critique, not to mention a large variety of critical analysis directed at it. Schematically, the early work of the German Historical School took a macro orientation to its study of the marketplace (cf. Tadajewski, 2010a). They were concerned – at the University of Wisconsin at least – with distributive justice and ethics (Jones and Monieson, 1990). There are a number of excellent

resources that help educators introduce what are called the first paradigm debates. These took place between two different interpretations of the German Historical School offered by Harvard and Wisconsin respectively. Jones and Monieson (1990), Jones (1994) and Jones and Monieson (1987) all illuminate the dynamics of the two different interpretations of this school of thought during the first three decades of the twentieth century (see also Tadajewski, 2014). Suffice to say, the ethical orientation of Wisconsin was gradually displaced by the managerial approach associated with the Harvard Business School. The latter focused on analysing issues of interest to the marketing manager rather than looking at the business system as a whole.

The 1930s saw a flowering of critique, particularly among “muckraking” journalists, former advertising professionals and some scholars (Tadajewski, 2010a, 2013). This critique was displaced by the boom years following the Second World War when critical analyses of the business system were few and far between – excepting the work of the Frankfurt School outside of marketing and the contributions of Vance Packard, Betty Friedan, and David Caplovitz (among many others). The late 1960s did see the revival of Critical research in marketing. Younger scholars, most notably, were concerned about the way marketing was perceived to be part of the military industrial establishment (Arnold and Fisher, 1996; Kassarian and Goodstein, 2010). And its role in systems maintenance, that is, with encouraging consumption and consumerism were the subject of scathing commentary, particularly from the environmental movement. This led a small cohort of academics to rethink marketing’s relationship with society.

As mentioned above, the pursuit of profit can have very negative consequences for wider society (Bakan, 2005; McDonagh, 2002). This is especially important given the encroachment of capitalist values into areas of social life previously outside of marketplace calculations (Hochschild, 2012). Put differently, the decline of socialist alternatives to the capitalist system has “led to a fatal triumphalism in the West. The feeling of being among the winners of world history is seductive. In this case, it contributed to inflating a theory of economic policy [capitalism and neoliberalism] into a worldview that permeates all areas of life” (Habermas, 2009: 229). What Habermas means is that many facets of the social world are increasingly examined through the prism of economics and market-based decision-making. Critical Marketing Studies, as

a counterpoint, aims to highlight these dynamics and underscore how and where people are contesting extant power relations (e.g. Bradshaw et al., 2006; Chatzidakis et al., 2012). And Critical Marketing Education is one of the major ways we can foster this process of self-reflection, emancipation and societal change in the next generation.

Critical Marketing Education

There have been recent calls for marketing education to take a Critical turn. As expressed by Maclaran and Tadajewski (2011: 300), “At the heart of this pedagogical approach is the idea of critical reflection, encouraging students to think about the wider implications of marketing activities and set these in their broader macro context...Critical Marketing Education, then, seeks to remind students as future for-profit and not-for-profit actors that all marketing practice takes place within society and that society ultimately sanctions its continued existence”. This project of rethinking marketing education is intended to ensure that marketing is not merely a “controlling science” (Heede, 1985), that is, one which supports the status-quo via the production of knowledge for the marketing manager and the moulding of student subjectivity in line with the needs of corporate capitalism. The counterpoint is viewing marketing as a “liberating science” (Heede, 1985), concerned with changing the marketing system through systematic critique in order to acknowledge where certain interests, perspectives and values are being served and others denied (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002).

Critical Marketing, I submit, should be included in all courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Certainly, a “balanced” curriculum contains elements of mainstream perspectives – marketing as embodied in the marketing concept, aiming to create satisfied customers – and Critical perspectives that see the above statement as hiding all manner of power relations, asymmetries and inequalities (Benton, 1985, 1987). Threading throughout this educational endeavour is an interest in studying marketing management as an object for interrogation, comparing and contrasting what corporations and practitioners say they do, with the ultimate result of their practices on society. This requires that students are exposed to relevant educational materials in terms of current academic articles, books and popular sources, combined with

alternative media like some of the excellent documentaries available that can serve to problematise practice. There are, for instance, a few specialised textbooks that merit attention: Hackley (2009a) and Ellis et al (2011) are the main sources for alternative perspectives available at the moment. While Hackley (2009a) assumes a degree of specialist knowledge and is suitable for advanced students, Ellis et al (2011) can be used on an introduction to marketing course with little modification.

There are many other sources worthy of consultation (e.g. Parsons and Maclaran, 2009; Saren *et al.*, 2007; Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008; Tadajewski and Cluley, 2014; Tadajewski and Maclaran, 2009), including journal outlets such as the *Journal of Marketing Management*, *Marketing Theory*, *Consumption*, *Markets & Culture*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *Sociology*, *Discourse & Society*, *Critical Sociology*, the *Sociological Review*, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *Feminism & Psychology* and even outliers like the *Journal of Drug Issues*, all of which publish manuscripts that take a Critical perspective on marketing. These types of readings highlight the complex and politically fraught nature of marketing practice. Within these materials, for example, there are analyses which strike at the centre of the conceptual universe in our discipline. They deal with the marketing concept (Tadajewski, 2010b), consumer sovereignty (Dixon, 1992/2008) and relationship marketing (O'Malley and Prothero, 2004; Smith and Higgins, 2000). They remind us that the narratives found in many mainstream texts are one-dimensional. After all, we know that the consumer is often limited in their cognitive and information analytic skills (Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Firat, 2014), with their behaviour channelled in very specific ways, using a variety of techniques (e.g. Johnston and Sandberg, 2008; Knights *et al.*, 1994; Korczynski, 2005; Korczynski and Ott, 2005, 2006). In other words, marketing is about world creation and subjectification. It is not merely concerned with responding to latent needs. It is a generative force in society for good and ill.

Having now introduced Critical Marketing Studies and some of its underlying assumptions, let us explore worked examples of its contribution to marketing pedagogy.

Critical Marketing: Worked Example

Within the confines of this brief paper, let me focus upon examples I have used in my teaching with undergraduates at various levels. Any course naturally begins with reference to the interwoven tapestry of issues that I have asserted is a productive way of making sense of Critical Marketing above. An introduction should be historical and contextually sensitive. It should underscore the development of marketing theory, thought and practice as largely an American storyⁱⁱⁱ and begin with an overview of the development of the discipline. There are useful historical surveys that can assist the lecturer here (e.g. Jones and Monieson, 1990; Tadajewski, 2010a) and recommended lists of further reading that can be consulted (e.g. Benton, 1985).

On any course I teach, I try to refrain from remaining wedded to a single textbook. Instead I use a combination of the Ellis et al (2011) introduction to marketing book that takes a critical-ethical perspective. This is supplemented with materials from the large scale readers on Critical Marketing (Tadajewski and Cluley, 2013; Tadajewski and Maclaran, 2009), a dictionary of concise reviews of key concepts in Critical Management Studies (Tadajewski *et al.*, 2011), additional readings from Brownlie et al (1999) and a reasonable quantity of journal articles (roughly two per lecture seems optimal). This material provides students with enough insight into each topic for an undergraduate course. For example, a sampling of the Tadajewski and Cluley (2013) four volume work includes:

1. material on the history of critical marketing;
2. theoretical and conceptual perspectives on critical marketing;
3. critiques of marketing and critical marketing;
4. critical social marketing;
5. co-creation, governmentality and the labour process;
6. service work, experience production and customer manipulation;
7. marketing ethics and morality;

8. racism, discrimination and whiteness theory; and
9. gender, sexuality, and the consumption of people and organs.

This can be supplemented with material from the Tadajewski and Maclaran volumes (2009) which deal with:

1. The development of critical perspectives in marketing;
2. Social and societal marketing;
3. Critical reflections on marketing management;
4. Critiques of the consumer society;
5. Critical Theory and marketing;
6. Critical Theory and advertising;
7. Feminist reflections on marketing;
8. The agency of the consumer;
9. The shaping of consumption choices;
10. Liberatory consumption;
11. Marketing and global social justice; and
12. The ethics of marketing.

In the first lecture I pose a series of questions that the course will revolve around. This participatory emphasis thus reflects the advice offered by Critical Management educators (e.g. Grey *et al.*, 1996) that student participation and experiential learning are central to a critical pedagogy. Specifically, I ask does the marketing system really meet the needs and requirements of the people on this planet? Secondly, does the marketing system or organisation actually listen to the consumer and respond to their desires? Thirdly, is the consumer sovereign in the marketplace? To help students think through these questions I adopt a multiple paradigm strategy whereby different paradigmatic positions as articulated in influential papers are reviewed. Thus, I begin with a managerialist narrative such as Keith's (1960) seminal *Journal of Marketing* paper and

then turn to more Critically oriented literature in a number of steps: from Keith (1960) to Brownlie and Saren (1992), then Benton (1987) and finally Tadajewski (2010b).

Generally speaking, a mainstream response to these questions will draw upon Robert J. Keith's (1960) "The Marketing Revolution" which can be interpreted as answering each in the positive. I should underscore that students must read the original source, as there are far too many misinterpretations of Keith's work in mainstream textbooks (Jones and Richardson, 2007). It merits this attention because this narrative is so central to our disciplinary identity in terms of the "eras model" of production, sales, marketing and marketing control (Tadajewski, 2010b). It has also garnered a considerable amount of scholarly attention which means it is easy to juxtapose the claims made in this paper against the historical development of marketing thought and capitalism more generally. As a case study, it can be read in numerous ways depending on the needs of the lecturer. Firstly, the argument deployed by Keith can be subject to historical scrutiny. This can be achieved by rethinking the genealogy that Keith presents, challenging his eras model. Marketing historians have expended considerable energies on this front (e.g. Fullerton, 1988; Hollander, 1986; Jones and Richardson, 2007). Secondly, it can be interrogated from a historical-critical perspective, by being compared against the actual practices of the company (e.g. Tadajewski, 2010b). Thirdly, Keith's work can be read using a feminist lens to contest the gendered nature of the eras discourse (e.g. Fischer and Bristor, 1994).

For Critical scholars, the answers to these questions will differ markedly from those of mainstream textbooks. One of the best sources is Brownlie and Saren (1992). It questions the value of the marketing concept, asks whose needs are being served, undermines the valorisation of consumer sovereignty and makes reference to organisational politics which hinder the implementation of the marketing concept. Marketing, for these writers, is about manipulation and the influencing of consumers, not necessarily about satisfying them, certainly not in the sense that their demands are always used to inform product development. Drawing from Benton, it can then be suggested that the invocation of the marketing concept helps elide power relations between organisations and their customers, as well as corporate moves to control

markets in ways that might not be in the interest of the ultimate consumer (Benton, 1987). Attention can then be turned to Tadjewski's manuscript which can be read in conjunction with the wider literature on the nature of markets and the means governments have to control them. Important here are laws like the Sherman Act which makes attempts to control markets through the joint action of companies illegal (e.g. Dickson and Wells, 2001; for a UK example, see Ashton and Pressey, 2011).

Moving topic slightly, an excellent account that situates the category of the consumer in historical context is found in Strasser (1989). She charts the conceptualisation of the market and consumer as malleable. During the mid to late nineteenth century, the "customer" – the individual who was known personally to the retailer, whose desires and interests were moulded on an inter-personal basis – morphed into the "consumer", the person who lived far away from the manufacturing base of a given firm. Through research and appropriate marketing communications, their preferences could be shaped to fit with organisational requirements. Put slightly differently, the above narrative moves the consumer from the centre of our analytic attention, highlighting an important role for marketing in shaping human lived-experience. At the same time as these discursive moves were being made, there was also the rise of a complementary discourse (circa 1914) of the consumer being depicted as king or sovereign in the marketplace (Ward, 2009, 2010). Lecturers can undermine the validity of this concept as an accurate reflection of the dynamics of the marketplace without difficulty (see Dixon, 1992/2008).

The idea that the customer is sovereign is dubious on multiple fronts. The economics literature carefully unpacks the idea that consumer sovereignty exists in an ideal form and finds it a misrepresentation of consumer power in the marketplace. Secondly, the notion of the customer as "king" is problematic. Historically, Charles Coolidge Parlin articulated this concept in an attenuated form (Ward, 2009). Only certain segments have merited sovereign status. They were usually affluent, well-educated and thus the ideal target for the offerings of marketers. But, there were various other groups who were not considered as desirable. The unemployed and non-white were excluded (Ward, 2009). Recognition of the boundaries and exclusions accompanying C.C. Parlin's "customer is king" phrase, then, has the potential to introduce

related debates on the structural barriers and inequalities that are ever present in the marketplace into a course. This is essential given that such barriers continue to exist. For those seeking to incorporate these ideas, recent research has investigated the presence of racist assumptions in marketing theory and practice (Tadajewski, 2012), the racist discourses mobilised in the service industries (e.g. Bailey, 2000; Mallinson and Brewster, 2005) and found in television campaigns (e.g. Bristor *et al.*, 1995). This material is reprinted in Tadajewski and Cluley's (2013) *New Directions in Critical Marketing Studies*. Related research can be found in the journal, *Discourse & Society*. Somewhat disconcertingly, these papers are easily linked with contemporary advertising communications. While I was researching this topic, new ads that employed racist language and imagery appeared with some frequency. For lecturers who seek to encourage reflection on these issues, the study of Aunt Jemima by Judy Foster Davis (2007) and the methods she outlines for preventing racist assumptions creeping into advertising is worthy of discussion.

However, to shift focus, why should we assume that the customer is always someone worth dealing with, treating well and respectfully, whose needs take priority? We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that the customer is or should be king or queen. They might be a liar (Eddy 1912 in Tadajewski, 2009). They might be an "abusive" bully (Bishop and Hoel, 2008; Korczynski and Ott, 2004). They may even be a pervert who makes staff feel distinctly uncomfortable (Tyler, 2009). Is it any wonder then that employees sometimes give customers "shit" (Stein, 2007) having taken enough of it themselves? To put this in different terms, a Critically oriented course does not always have to idolise the customer. It can provide students with the resources to deal with perverse individuals, teaching them how to modify the power dynamics between the troublesome customer and the retail worker (e.g. Johnston and Sandberg, 2008). Certainly, a Critical Marketing curriculum needs to engage with consumer misbehaviour and the deliberate attempts by people to sabotage the exchange process in various ways, ranging from not telling retailers about being given extra change (Fullerton and Punj, 1998, 2004), all the way to the sexual threats that severely disturbed individuals articulate toward staff (e.g. Daunt and Harris, 2011; Daunt and Harris, 2012).

Not only do producer and consumer interests not always align, producer and consumer objectives are not necessarily commensurate with the long-term viability of the biosphere. The ecological critique of the marketing concept as anthropocentric in nature is important and the studies produced by Kilbourne and colleagues with regards to the “dominant social paradigm” and the “ideology of consumption” are worthy of attention by those seeking to incorporate an ecological edge into their courses (e.g. Kilbourne *et al.*, 1997). These ideas can be united with research associated with ecofeminism (e.g. Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001/2008) which documents how some groups try to limit the impact of their activities on the natural world; indeed, refusing the label “consumer” at all, preferring instead “conserver”.

Gender, Sexism and the Cultural Industries

Marketing has an ambivalent relationship with gender. Four articles will help set the scene for this discussion. Maclaran’s (2012) account of the relationship between marketing and feminism is a highly useful orientation device and an ideal piece to distribute to students. Linda Scott’s (2000) book chapter further develops many of the ideas in the Maclaran paper, emphasising the productive use of the market by feminist writers and lecturers. Zuckerman and Carsky (1990) provide a valuable overview of the contributions made by female scholars and practitioners in the early twentieth century, revealing how their ideas were prescient and chime with those articulated by Belk (1988) and other contemporary contributors. Another excellent paper is Maclaran *et al.*’s (1997) engagement with women in marketing management, their concept of the “glasshouse effect”, and depiction of the marginalisation of female labour in a gender stratified workplace; an issue that is historically very longstanding.

Gender stratification is extensively documented in the submissions to the special issue of the *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* on female practitioners and academics (Vol. 5 No. 3). As the special issue reveals, women were frequently paid less than men and subject to sexist and derogatory comments. These factors were compounded by intersectional barriers, that is, women who were already subject to marginalisation by virtue of their gender, faced greater struggles if they were also an ethnic minority. The

concept of intersectionality is reviewed and explained superbly by Gopaldas (2013) and can be linked to the theoretical tradition of “critical multiculturalism” (Burton, 2002). These topics come together in Davis’ (2013) research on black advertising executives. This scholarship is not just of historical interest. There are a variety of empirical studies that reveal the gender, ethnic and class-based biases still prevalent in the advertising industry today (e.g. McLeod *et al.*, 2009, 2010; Windels and Lee, 2012).

These themes can be developed in a slightly different direction by looking at how feminist ideas have been appropriated by the marketing industry. The exemplar is the Dove “Real Beauty” campaign. In spite of the intention of the campaign, there is generalised discomfort with a corporation acting as the mouthpiece for feminist ideals, challenging the “beauty myth” propagated by the *same* industry. In equal measure, there is appreciation of the fact that marketer-led communications do introduce empowering discourses to the wider public. As such, this ethical grey area presents an excellent starting point for classroom debate.

Until recently many papers dealing with this case have offered useful reviews of the campaign (e.g. Johnson and Taylor, 2008) but left the neophyte lecturer with little further support. A recent publication in *Critical Sociology* by Taylor et al (2016) takes their earlier review work one step further and engages in an evaluation of the communications strategy, using focus groups to probe whether it was consistent with feminist values. As might be expected, the evaluation was lukewarm. It will, nonetheless, foster explorations of feminism and marketing’s use of social criticism to forward a profit-driven agenda.

International and Global Marketing

The history of international and global marketing is an interesting one (see Tadajewski et al., 2014). As Cunningham and Jones (1997) have documented, the earliest courses in marketing were often accompanied by an international dimension. Historians have likewise encouraged us to view globalisation – and the problems that have accompanied it (e.g. Klein, 2000) – from a longer-term perspective than is normally appreciated. It is clear that the global trade in products and services has a long lineage and often a dark-side

linked to slavery, the marketing of harmful drugs and racist discourses (e.g. Domosh, 2006). Moreover, for those who seek to take a Critical orientation very seriously, there is room to engage with the relationship between marketing theory and practice and recent wars. As Apple (1990), Jhally (1993) and others have pointed out (e.g. McCarthy, 2007, 2009), attempting to ensure access to necessary minerals and resources that are central to the high consumption lifestyles of the affluent has been used as a means to legitimate recent geopolitical aggression (Apple, 1990). While this topic remains less well developed – the Ellis et al (2011) textbook contains a case study based on the relationship between marketing and war – it would be one of the more interesting angles for scholars to research and educators to incorporate into their lectures.

At the very least, internationally oriented courses have to engage with the history of international trade, colonialism and racism that underpin the early history of marketing practice fairly clearly, and whose tropes continue to feature in the latest literature. Articulating the colonial assumptions and “civilising mission” narratives present in the promotion of some of the earliest major brands is comparatively easy given the articles and book length studies on these topics (e.g. Tadajewski et al., 2014). Seminal contributions have been made by Domosh (2006), McClintock (1995) and Ramamurthy (2000, 2003) among others. While I am eliding the differences in their arguments, what they document are assumptions about the plasticity of subjectivity and the idea that people around the world, particularly those hailing from non-western nations, would welcome branded goods as a “taste” of civilisation and “development” (see also Applbaum, 2000; Svensson, 2007; Tadajewski et al., 2014). What is extremely useful is that the arguments offered by these scholars are usually complemented by interpretations of visual media such as advertisements which are linked to wider discussions of political economy. This visual dimension means they are useful for mixed ability student audiences. They can also be used in conjunction with the debates about advertising and its role in shaping or reflecting the world as exemplified by Pollay’s (1986, 1987) and Holbrook’s (1987) debate in the *Journal of Marketing*. Ramamurthy’s (2000) paper, for instance, is an impressive close interpretation of a number of Lipton’s tea advertisements which unpicks how large corporations supported the UK colonial project and how advertisements reflected the ideas that undergirded colonialism. For those interested in exploring these issues further, Gavin Jack (2008) provides a useful

summary of Anne McClintock's work (1995), linking this to contemporary scholarship, while Applbaum (2000) engages empirically with related topics. Other areas worth tackling in any international or global marketing course would naturally include the debates currently raging regarding the "Base of the Pyramid" (e.g. Bonsu and Polsa, 2011; Chatterjee, 2014).

Having now reviewed the development of the field of Critical Marketing Studies and indicated some areas where Critical Marketing can inform marketing education, I will briefly list some useful orientation materials for lecturers, following this with ten reviews of pertinent DVD documentaries.

Online Resources

<http://www.corpwatch.org/>

<http://criticalmanagement.org/>

http://www.criticalsociology.org/classroom_tools/index.html

<http://www.sutjhally.com/lectures>

<https://www.adbusters.org/>

Orientation Materials for Lecturers

Introductions to Critical Perspectives

Mingers, J. (2000) 'What is it to be Critical?', *Management Learning* 31(2): 219–237.

Fournier, V. and Grey, C. (2000) 'At the Critical Moment: Conditions and Prospects for Critical Management Studies', *Human Relations* 53(1): 7–32.

Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., and Kärreman, D. (2009) 'Critical Performativity: The Unfinished Business of Critical Management Studies', *Human Relations* 62(4): 537–560.

Tadajewski, M. (2010a) 'Toward a History of Critical Marketing Studies', *Journal of Marketing Management* 26(9-10): 773-824.

Tadajewski, M. (2010c) 'Critical Marketing Studies: Logical Empiricism, 'Critical Performativity', and Marketing Practice', *Marketing Theory* 10(2): 210-222.

Introductions to Critical Marketing Education

Catterall, M., Maclaran, P., and Stevens, L. (1999) 'Critical Marketing in the Classroom: Possibilities and Challenges', *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 17(7): 344–353.

Catterall, M., Maclaran, P., and Stevens, L. (2002) 'Critical Reflection in the Marketing Curriculum', *Journal of Marketing Education* 24(3): 184–192.

Maclaran, P. and Tadajewski, M. (2011) 'A Critical Marketing Perspective on Marketing Education and Theory', *Social Business* 1(3): 300–303.

Benton, R. (1985) 'Micro Bias and Macro Prejudice in the Teaching of Marketing', *Journal of Macromarketing* Fall: 43–58.

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Recommended Texts

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Recommended DVDs

The DVDs discussed below are materials that I have used most recently in taught courses. There are, of course, many others that would be worthy of inclusion such as the *Century of the Self*, *The Corporation*, *Super Size Me*, *McLibel* and *The Shock Doctrine* to name just five.

Vanalkemade, R. (2007) *What Would Jesus Buy?* Artefact Films.

This is a highly entertaining critical interrogation of American society. Its focus is upon the extent to which consumerism has formed the core axiology in US society, leading people to spend more time shopping every week than they do communicating with their children in meaningful conversation. The result is growing levels of consumer debt, with some unfortunate people becoming addicted to shopping. Shopping, as the film highlights, brings some people a great deal of pleasure, while for others it becomes something they dread, having to keep up with the Jones' by providing their children with the latest gadgets and gizmos that take them further into "eternal debt", so that it takes them nearly a year to pay for each prior Christmas.

This film charts the efforts by an anti-consumerist performance activist group – the “Church of Stop Shopping” – to encourage people to be more conscientious shoppers and to restrict what they buy to only those things they really need. This message is relayed by “Reverend” Billy and his gospel choir across the U.S. Connected to this, they encourage people to avoid supporting the big box retailers who devastate local communities, pay their staff very little and seek out the lowest priced locations where they outsource their production, irrespective of the harm their “hardball” negotiating tactics do to the people employed in the factories making Disney products (this company features prominently in the film).

In short, what we see here is an attempt to encourage people to become the kind of critically reflexive marketplace participant that Ozanne and Murray (1995) have sketched. And what is refreshing is that those aligned with the “Church” admit that they do not have all the answers about how to consume. They suggest that people follow a two-step process of reflection when buying, however. Firstly, look for products made in America (or your own home country). Secondly, purchase your goods and services from local retailers and merchants so that your money will circulate through the local community rather than pad the bank accounts of some of the wealthiest people in the world – Wal*Mart is another key target in this film. So, alongside the Ozanne and Murray (1995) paper mentioned above, I would also suggest that lecturers consult Murtola, A-M. (2012) “Materialist Theology and Anti-Capitalist Resistance, or, ‘What Would Jesus Buy?’”, *Organization* 19(3): 325-344.

Smith, C., Ollman, D. and Price, S. (2005). *The Yes Men*. Tartan.

Bichlbaum, A., Bonanno, M., and Engfehr, I. (2010) *The Yes Men Fix the World*. Dogwoof.

In her reflections on Critical Management Education, Contu (2011: 544) stresses the important role for “Over-identification with the positions, claims, and behaviors established in the mainstream”. What she means by this is taking the stance of the mainstream to an extreme. For Contu, one of the best examples of this strategy are the activities of The Yes Men. I can only echo her sentiment and encourage marketing scholars to explore the DVDs produced by this community of activists. Specifically, my interpretation of

their films is that they represent what social marketing with its emphasis on behavioural and ideational change could practice if it was not tied so closely to government, corporations and other forms of sponsorship (O'Shaughnessy, 1996; Tadjewski et al., 2014). The Yes Men are a group of anti-corporate activists with a high degree of technical knowledge and a huge amount of tenacity. They set up websites purporting to represent some of the biggest corporations on the planet – usually corporations with very bad reputations – or groups whose activities are problematic such as the World Trade Organization (see Smith *et al.*, 2005). After doing so, they wait for invitations to large public events such as conferences or television interviews. They subsequently attend these events pretending to be representatives for these groups and make statements that take, for example, a neoliberal axiology to its extreme in an effort to encourage critical reflection on these values and their ramifications on people around the world. In the second film in the series, for example, they present themselves as representatives of Dow Chemicals in the wake of their purchase of Union Carbide – the latter being implicated in one of the largest industrial accidents this planet has seen so far. 18,000 people were injured and the Yes Men announce – in front of 300 million viewers on BBC Worldwide – that Dow will fully compensate all victims. For a time this wiped billions off the stock price of Dow thereby indicating exactly what is valued within capitalistically driven marketplaces, namely shareholder dividends rather than ethics. This announcement did not exactly have the effect that the Yes Men wanted, but I will not spoil the narrative. Both DVD's are highly recommended for ethics and corporate social responsibility lectures.

Francis, N. and Francis, M. (2006) *Blackgold: Wake Up and Smell the Coffee*. Speak-It Films. See also: <http://blackgoldmovie.com>

This film tackles a range of issues that are important in relation to supply chains and distributive justice. It highlights the coffee trade and explores how the marketplace benefits some participants more than others, in this case the retailer rather than the poor farmer who produces coffee beans. It touches upon issues like information asymmetries and how these affect the ability of the producer to secure an appropriate distribution of the benefits that flow from the marketing system. More generally it deals with fair trade and

supply chains. It could be usefully paired with Anna Tsing's recent work: Tsing, A. (2009)

"Supply Chains and the Human Condition", *Rethinking Marxism* 21 (2):148-176. The website that accompanies the film is very good, providing one especially useful feature that asks the user to input how many coffees they drink each day and then graphically breaks down the profit distribution. The farmer, predictably, comes out very badly whilst the retailer does very well. From my experience, this surprises students. Whether it changes their behaviour is, of course, another question entirely.

Greenwald, R. (2005) *Wal*Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*. Tartan.

This frankly shocking documentary charts the rise to prominence of the big box retailers whose low prices are derived from their hardball negotiation tactics with suppliers. It illustrates their power with respect to local community groups and councils, their willingness to pay low wages whilst encouraging their staff to claim benefits and utilise food banks. It will highlight to students that while low prices might be desirable from their perspective, in the end someone has to pay for them, and it is the people who work long hours for low wages. The film culminates with a reflection on the wealth amassed by the family who own Wal*Mart and their fortune is vast. This could be used to help stimulate a discussion on the benefits and costs of the marketing system. A paper that might be useful in conjunction with this film is: Foster, D., McCann, J. and Tunno, M. (2003) "Wal-Mart or World-Mart? A Teaching Case Study", *Review of Radical Political Economics* 35(4): 513–533.

Paine, C. (2007) *Who Killed the Electric Car*. Sony Pictures.

Paine, C. (2012) *Revenge of the Electric Car*. Dogwoof.

It is reasonable to suppose that a move to electric cars would be beneficial in numerous ways – homeland security, environmental protection and so forth – but for various reasons these cars have not yet made a substantial dent in the auto-market. In a very balanced analysis, the first film charts the rise of the car, underscoring that electric cars were available from the outset. They were, however, displaced by petroleum

engines. Nonetheless, in the early to mid-1990s, there were moves to introduce electric cars to the mass market. The film focuses on California in particular and the establishment of an infrastructure to enable these vehicles to function efficiently. Despite a fairly impressive level of demand among early adopters, the cars were eventually recalled and destroyed, being buried in the desert in some cases. The film subsequently asks questions about where responsibility lies for the failure of the electric car. This is where the film is exceptionally balanced, referring to consumer apathy and engine capacity among other factors.

It is worth using these documentaries to illuminate the complex dynamics between marketing's ideology of a consumer orientation and the needs of organisations to realise profit objectives. Both films represent a set of rich resources on multiple fronts (e.g. dealing with consumer agency, activism, marketing communications and macromarketing issues). The second film effectively follows the trials and tribulations of producing and marketing a particular brand of electric car, one which combined environmentally friendly credentials with the kind of sporty styling likely to appeal to the well-heeled professional classes.

Mantel, H. and Skrovan, S. (2006) *An Unreasonable Man*. ITC Films.

As many readers will no doubt appreciate, Ralph Nader has been a passionate advocate for the consumer for a considerable period of time. This documentary charts the various projects he has undertaken either alone or with a team of young idealistic researchers called "Nader's Raiders". Nader first came to prominence with his study of auto safety and what he called the "designed in dangers of automobiles". This related to the placement of fuel tanks, the build of the steering wheel, the sharp edges of the internal structure of cars, among many other undesirable features. What is interesting about this film is the extent to which it shows how profit requirements drive corporate decision-making rather than the needs and safety of the ultimate consumer. The corporate response to Nader's research is fascinating, involving hiring private detectives, prostitutes and using a range of other tactics to discredit him. Nader's point is that ultimately there were systemic failings in Detroit's auto-industry which compromised the safety of the consumer and their passengers.

Mistrati, M. and Romano, U.R. (2010) *The Dark Side of Chocolate*. Bastard TV and Video.

This film deals with a product that we all probably consume regularly, chocolate. It could be usefully combined with a discussion of the Marxian concept of commodity fetishism (see Dunne, 2011) or Zygmunt Bauman's work on adiaphorisation (see Tadajewski and Hamilton, 2014). Commodity fetishism basically refers to the idea that production relations are hidden from view and so we perceive products solely in terms of their exchange value – the price we pay – rather than the labour that goes into them. Adiaphorisation connotes that the further we are in spatial or cognitive terms from the production origins of the things we buy, the more morally distant we become from the effects of our consumption (see Desmond, 1998). These concepts are useful because this film refers to the widespread use of child labour to harvest the cocoa bean, one of the central constituents of chocolate. It reveals the trafficking of children to plantations on the Ivory Coast, some of whom go willingly, others who do not. It is a harrowing film. What is truly depressing is that it is possible to buy a child slave for two hundred and forty euros. And that price is negotiable. What is noteworthy about this documentary is that many of the major purchasers of cocoa deny any knowledge of the use of child slaves in the harvesting of the products they buy. Their denials are not convincing. I would suggest combining this film with a discussion of the Pennington et al (2009) *Journal of Macromarketing* paper on human trafficking and their review of this film (Pennington and Ball, 2012). Both highlight the dark-side of the market and marketing processes.

Poulsen, F.P. (2011) *Nokia: Blood in the Mobile*. Dogwoof.

This is another film that works well with a discussion of commodity fetishism and adiaphorisation. It resonates with students given that the majority own a mobile phone. The central message is that conflict and slave harvested gem stones are used in the manufacture of these products. And the purchase of these gems contributes to the on-going wars taking place in the Congo. Focusing on an area known for warlord brutality and slavery, it foregrounds the working conditions of the people labouring in mines that supply the gems we

need for our communication vehicles. The conditions are harsh and dangerous, with mines collapsing on a frequent basis. It is a film to use carefully, however, as some of the examples are distressing with vivid descriptions of rape and murder.

Conclusion

In the last ten years, the literature on Critical Marketing Studies has exploded. We have a decent literature base, pertinent teaching resources and courtesy of the revolution stimulated by the Internet, access to multimedia supplies that past generations of lecturers could not have envisaged. It is time we brought this material into the classroom, using it to provide our students with an empirically realistic representation of the marketplace. Our textbooks do not typically provide this and we are remiss in our role as educators if we prefer the ontological security of “happy families” narratives over the problematic and disconcerting realities of the marketplace for many people on this planet. The marketplace is not an environment where everyone benefits; some suffer extremely serious consequences by virtue of their lack of access to financial resources or through the high level consumption habits of others that are responsible for environmental turbulence and the degradation of the biosphere.

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ⁱⁱ A capitalised "C" is used to indicate research drawing upon some form of critical social theory to interrogate marketing theory, thought and practice.

ⁱⁱⁱ I am speaking here about marketing as taught in university schools of business. The history of the practices associated with marketing are far longer and less American or Eurocentric than can be explained in this narrative.